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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2210

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COMMITTEE ON
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ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND
GLOBAL WARMING

The Honorable James Oberstar
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Oberstar:

Thank you for your personal attention to the rupture of the Enbridge Line 6B pipeline on July 25/26. As you know, this spill has resulted in approximately one million gallons of crude oil being spilled into the Kalamazoo River near Marshall, Michigan. While the environmental impact of this disaster on aquatic and plant life will be felt for years to come, we are fortunate that this spill will not directly impact the Great Lakes.

The Michigan Delegation has been opposed to slant drilling in the Great Lakes, and we need to be ever vigilant about what goes on in or near our waters. As the facts of this incident become known, I believe the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure will play an important role in uncovering the factors that caused this incident and shaping new policies that will prevent similar incidents in the future. Just as the Committee has responded to the Deepwater Horizon incident with investigation, hearings, and legislative remedies, I believe the Enbridge spill can be the catalyst that results in a safer pipeline system in our country.

What has been learned so far about Enbridge and the line 6B pipeline appears to be deeply troubling. In June, 2009, Enbridge's own assessment of the pipeline revealed over 200 anomalies between mileposts 650 and 753, and a large portion of this pipeline runs through Macomb and St. Clair County. These sections of the pipeline are closer in proximity to the Great Lakes than this spill which occurred at milepost 608. Instead of taking action to make necessary repairs, Enbridge chose to operate the pipeline at a lower pressure level. However, just a few weeks ago on July 17, Enbridge requested from PHMSA the ability to operate Line 6B at that lower pressure for an additional 2 ½ years

This pipeline actually terminates in Sarnia, Ontario, in an area known as Chemical Valley on the banks of the St. Clair River. Chemical Valley is one of the largest collections of petro-chemical facilities in North America, and literally dozens of pipelines cross through St. Clair County in Michigan before cutting underneath the St. Clair River. Should any of the pipelines in this area rupture, the liquids would almost certainly end up in the Great Lakes.

Due to the spill from Line 6B at milepost 608 and the anomalies between mileposts 650 and 753, I have written the Pipelines and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration and requested that they thoroughly inspect Line 6B in this area. A spill in this area would be absolutely devastating to the Huron-to-Erie Corridor. A copy of this letter is enclosed for your records.

I have also requested that PHMSA make their records of this pipeline available to local and state emergency responders. As you have noted, a delay in the initial response can quickly magnify the impact of a spill. Sharing this information with first responders would allow them to properly plan for such a disaster and mitigate a spill as quickly as possible.

As the Committee investigates the spill in the Kalamazoo River, I would like you to expand the scope of the investigation and to consider the condition of Line 6B and other pipelines in the St. Clair County Area. A great deal of evidence indicating problems with Line 6B could actually be found in this area as opposed to where the rupture ultimately occurred.

I look forward to working with you as the Committee investigates this matter and ultimately creating a safer pipeline system for our country.

Sincerely,



Candice S. Miller
Member of Congress

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable John Mica
Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

The Honorable Corrine Brown
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials

The Honorable Bill Shuster
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials